

A revised title commensurate with the claimed subject matter has also been proposed.

By way of the amendment instructions above, the originally presented claims have been revised so as to address the Examiner's rejection advanced under 35 USC §112, second paragraph. In addition, the specification has been revised so as to address the Examiner's criticism thereof.

Claims 13 and 14 have been cancelled and replaced by new claims 15. In addition, new independent claims 16 and 17 have been submitted for consideration. Specifically, new claims 16 and 17 are substantively similar to the amended version of claim 1, but further includes subject matter supported by page 14, lines 21 to page 15, line 9, and page 17, line 16 to page 18, line 21 of the originally filed specification. Claims 18-27 depend directly or indirectly from claims 16 and/or 17 and are based on dependent claims as originally filed.

Hence, claims 1-12 and 15-27 are presently pending in this application for which favorable reconsideration on the merits is requested.

The only issue remaining to be resolved is the Examiner's rejection advanced under 35 USC §103(a) based on Leavitt, in combination with Wach et al (ref. 1A07), Wach et al (ref. 2G05) and Wach et al (1008), Schweiger and Assarsson.

In response, applicants note that each of the references 1A07 and 2G05 bear a publication date of October 3-5, 2000 and October 5-6, 2000, respectively. Thus, each of references 1A07 and 2G05 have effective publication dates which are within one (1) year prior to the filing date of January 29, 2001 of the subject application. As such, each of references 1A07 and 2G05 rise to the status of prior art against the present application only under 35 USC §102(a).

Applicants further note that the subject application is based on a non-priority application filed in Japan on June 23, 1999, namely JP 11-177517.³ Therefore, since Japan is a WTO member, and since the JP 11-177517 application evidences, through its Examples, an actual reduction to practice in Japan of the present invention prior to October 3-5, 2000 (i.e., at least as early as the June 23, 1999 filing date of the Japanese application), the attached formal Declaration under 37 CFR §1.131 (Tab C) which includes as an attachment (Tab D) a verified English language translation of the Japanese application) should remove each of references 1A07 and 2G05 as citations against the subject application – i.e., since neither would qualify as "prior art" under 35 USC §102(a) due to the earlier invention date accorded to the subject matter being claimed herein.

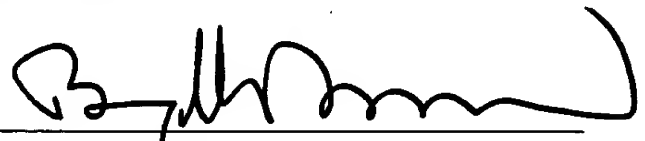
In view of the above, applicants submit that the Examiner's rejection advanced under 35 USC §103(a) must be withdrawn since references 1A07 and 2G05 have both been relied upon in combination with other applied secondary references and the applied primary reference to Leavitt to reject all originally presented claims herein.

In view of the amendments, remarks and attachments hereto, therefore, applicants suggest that the present application is in condition for allowance and Official Notice to that effect is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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³ A Supplemental Declaration which references such Japanese application, but notes that no priority claim is made thereto is also attached hereto under Tab B for inclusion into the Official Record.

APPENDIX I

Marked-Up Version of Specification Paragraph(s) Pursuant to 37 CFR §1.121(b)

Please change the paragraph on page 12, lines 14-18 to read as follows:

In the present invention, a mixture of a starting alkyl cellulose derivative and water₁ [—]in which the amount of water is 5 [—]to 2,000 parts by weight on the basis of 100 parts by weight of the alkyl cellulose derivative₁ [—]is irradiated with radioactive rays.

APPENDIX II

Marked-Up Version of Amended Claims Pursuant to 37 CFR §1.121(c)

1. (Amended) A process for producing a self-cross-[linking]linked alkyl cellulose, [derivative,] which comprises irradiating, with radioactive rays, a mixture of 100 parts by weight of an [a starting] alkyl cellulose [derivative (the number of carbon atoms of] wherein the alkyl group [is 1 to 3, the alkyl group] has 1 to 3 carbon atoms, and may be substituted by a hydroxyl group or a carboxyl group, and wherein the carboxyl group may be in the form of a salt, (100 parts by weight)) and 5 to 2,000 parts by weight of water [(5-2,000 parts by weight)].

2. (Amended) A process for producing a self-cross-[linking]linked alkyl cellulose, [derivative,] according to claim 1, wherein the [starting] alkyl cellulose [derivative] is carboxyalkyl cellulose, hydroxyalkyl cellulose, or alkyl cellulose, having at least one hydroxyl group or carboxyl group per glucose unit of a mixture of these celluloses.

3. (Amended) A process for producing a self-cross-[linking]linked alkyl cellulose, [derivative,] according to claim 1, wherein 20% or more of the entirety of carboxyl groups of the [starting] alkyl cellulose [derivative forms] is in the form of an alkali metal salt, an ammonium salt, or an amine salt.

4. (Amended) A process for producing a self-cross-[linking]linked alkyl cellulose, [derivative,] according to claim 2, wherein the [starting] alkyl cellulose [derivative] has an average polymerization degree of 10 [-] to 2,000 and an average etherification degree of 0.5 or more.

5. (Amended) A process for producing a self-cross-[linking]linked alkyl cellulose, [derivative,] according to claim 1, wherein the self-cross-linking alkyl cellulose [derivative] has a gel fraction of 0.1% or more.

6. (Amended) A process for producing a self-cross-[linking]linked alkyl cellulose, [derivative,] according to claim 1, wherein the dose of radioactive rays is 0.1 kGy or more [as reduced to γ -rays].

7. (Amended) A process for producing a self-cross-[linking]linked alkyl cellulose, [derivative,] according to claim 1, which further comprises drying the self-cross-linked cellulose [wherein the produced alkyl cellulose derivative is further subjected to a drying step].

8. (Amended) A self-cross-[linking]linked alkyl cellulose, [derivative,] produced by [through a production] process [as recited in claim 1] according to any one of claims 1-7.

9. (Amended) A self-cross-[linking]linked alkyl cellulose according to claim 8, wherein, when 0.2 g of the dried self-cross-[linking]linked alkyl cellulose [derivative (0.2g)] is added to [an] 10 ml of a buffered aqueous acetic acid solution [(buffer] having a pH of 4.5[)] containing 0.5 wt.% of cellulase and the resultant solution is allowed to stand at 40°C for eight hours, the percent biodegradation of the self-cross-linked alkyl cellulose [derivative] is 50% or more.

10. (Amended) A self-cross-[linking]linked alkyl cellulose according to claim [8] 9, wherein [, when the dried self-cross-linking alkyl cellulose derivative (0.2g) is added to an aqueous acetic acid solution (buffer having a pH of 4.5) containing 0.5 wt.% of cellulase and the resultant solution is allowed to stand at 40°C for eight hours,] the percent biodegradation [of the derivative] is 70% or more.

11. (Amended) A self-cross-[linking]linked alkyl cellulose according to claim 8, wherein the self-cross-linked alkyl cellulose absorbs 30 times or more its weight [amount] of distilled water[, which the self-cross-linking alkyl cellulose derivative absorbs is 30 times or more the weight of the derivative].

12. (Amended) A self-cross-[linking]linked alkyl cellulose according to claim 8, [wherein the resultant] in the form of a gel [has] having a compressive strength of 100 g/cm² or more.